



MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE:



Portland's Native American Community





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Portland has the 9th largest Native American population in the United States (MSA, US Census 2000). We live here and we thrive here. We are numerous. The Portland Urban Native community is descended from over 380 tribes and many of us are multi-tribal and multi-ethnic. We represent varying degrees of tribal affiliation: some of us are tribally enrolled and some of us are not, but we all have ancestral ties to our tribes. Some of us are enrolled members of local tribes with reserved treaty rights to fish and gather in the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, but many of us are members or descendants of more distant tribes. We come to this city for as many reasons as there are clans and people, and our stories are powerful.

The Portland Metro area rests on traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other Tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River, creating communities and summer encampments to harvest and use the plentiful natural resources of the area.

After European contact, what followed for the indigenous people of the Portland area was a series of territorial and then federal policy decisions designed to eliminate and later assimilate Native people. The 18th and early 19th centuries brought diseases that decimated populations, often killing 9 out of every 10 people (Boyd: 1999). The Boarding School Era policies, which lasted from the

mid 1800s through the 1960s, marked the beginning of a long campaign to integrate indigenous people into the Western culture. "Kill the Indian and save the man" summarized the philosophy that underlay most government policies of the era (Pratt: 1879). Federal Relocation Policy, which began in the 1950s, forced over a third of the Native population to relocate to seven major cities, including Portland (Fixico: 2002).

Termination of federal recognition of many tribes began in 1954. Under the Western Oregon Termination Act (1954) and the Klamath Termination Act (1954) a large number of Oregon Tribes had their governments abolished, lands taken and social services revoked. In 1977, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians would be the first Oregon Tribe to regain its federally recognized tribal status; the Grand Ronde, Klamath, have subsequently had their Termination repealed by an act of Congress, and other tribal communities have been federally recognized after decades of struggle. There are still tribes in Oregon for whom termination remains a bitter reality, and even for tribes who have been re-instated its effects are still felt. In response, thousands of our Native families came to Portland to seek jobs, a place to live, and community. In the 2000 U.S Census, the Portland MSA – a census bureau defined metropolitan region that includes Multnomah County and parts of three other counties – reported that there were 19, 209 Native Americans of one race and 38, 926 multi-



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racial Native Americans living in the Portland Metro area (US Census 2000, SF3).

Currently, Native people count disproportionately among the urban poor. We experience the highest rates of homelessness, poverty and unemployment of all ethnic groups; depression, addiction and diabetes impact us in numbers far exceeding the norm. We constitute 24% of all children in foster care in Multnomah County, and only 37% of our high school students living in Portland graduate on time (Portland Schools Foundation: 2006).

Even with our large population and the strong evidence of need, resources have not been equitably distributed to our community. There are false perceptions that we no longer exist and chronic undercounts, inaccurate data and stereotypes about what we look like perpetuate this misconception. It is commonly believed that our education, health care, and other social support systems are fully paid for by government funding or gaming /casino revenues. These misunderstandings lead to policies and decisions that limit our access to social services and other community resources in the city where we live.

Despite the barriers, we continue to foster our culture and celebrate our heritage. We are successful, contributing members of the city of Portland. We pay taxes, we volunteer, we vote, we share our heritage and we care about the collective future of our children and of this community. There are well over 20

Native organizations in the area, run by and staffed with Native people, and our combined resources represent over 50 million dollars in revenue that go to local taxes, businesses and services. Our population is young and growing; over 40% of our community is under the age of 25 (US Census 2000). Some of our most important work revolves around preparing our youth to become the future leaders of this city, their tribes, and our community.

We are passing on our many strengths and assets. We serve the community and we help each other. As distinct and urban tribal peoples may be, we have a collective vision of what we want for our children and families. We work to connect with other urban Native people; to create a common place to meet and reconnect to each other, our ceremonies and cultures. We want to be recognized and treated with respect. We want our cultures and religions to be valued. We want safe, affordable housing, access to employment options, and equal opportunities to build community. We have important and diverse indigenous values and worldviews that contribute to the livability and uniqueness of Portland, and we see ourselves as part of its future.

For more information and to support Portland's Native American community, please see the list of contributing organizations.



Portland's Native American Community **MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE:**

Contributing Organizations

Bonneville Power Administration Tribal Affairs (BPA)
www.bpa.gov/corporate/About_BPA/tribes

Bow and Arrow Culture Club
503.380.6595

ChristieCare
www.christiecare.org • 503.635.3416

Concerned Indian Citizens
503.285.4474

Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
503.238.1512

Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)
www.critfc.org • 503.238.0667

Good Spirit
503.515.2053

Lewis & Clark, Indigenous Ways of Knowing Program
www.lclark.edu/~iwok • 503.768.6155

National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)
www.nicwa.org • 503.222.4044

Native American Program, Legal Aid Services of Oregon (NAPOLS)
503.223.9483

Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA Family Center) www.nayapdx.org • 503.288.8177

Native People's Circle of Hope
www.nativepeoplescoh.org • 503.970.8004

Northwest Indian Veterans Association
<http://www.atnitribes.org/Veteran.html>
360.696-4061 Ext 3413

Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB)
www.npaihb.org • 503.228.4185

ONABEN – A Native American Business Network
www.onaben.org • 503.968.1500

One Sky Center
www.oneskycenter.org • 503.494.3703

Oregon Native American Chamber
www.onacc.org

Pi Nee Waus
503.477.5629

Portland Indian Elders Association
ravart@pacifier.com • mizzbuckie@comcast.net
360.574.6164

Portland State University Institute for Tribal Government
www.tribalgov.pdx.edu • 503.725-9000

Portland Public Schools Title VII Indian Education
www.indianed.pps.k12.or.us • 503.916.6499

Portland Youth and Elders Council
www.nayapdx.org • 503.288.8177

Tribal Leadership Forum
www.tribalgov.pdx.edu/forum.php • 503.647.7734

Wisdom of the Elders
www.wisdomoftheelders.org

